

# Hazard Alert

## Heat Illness at Work Can Be Deadly

**Water, Rest, Shade.** Taking these precautions can mean the difference between life and death.

### WHAT IS HEAT ILLNESS?



During hot weather, especially with high humidity, body temperature can rise to dangerous levels if precautions are not taken. Heat illnesses range from heat rash and heat cramps to heat exhaustion and

heat stroke. Heat stroke requires immediate medical attention and can result in death.

### NEBRASKA HEAT ILLNESS FACTS

#### DEATHS <sup>1</sup>

- 3 workers in Nebraska died as a result of exposure to environmental heat from 2008 to 2012.

#### EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT (ED) VISITS <sup>2</sup>

- From 2008 to 2012, 270 work-related emergency department (ED) visits in Nebraska were due to heat illness among workers aged 16 years and older.
- Work-related ED visits for heat illness occurred more frequently in males (86%) and in workers aged 25-34 years old (25%).
- 50% (134 cases) of work-related ED visits for heat illness occurred in July.
- 63% of work-related ED visits for heat illness were due to heat exhaustion.

#### REFERENCES

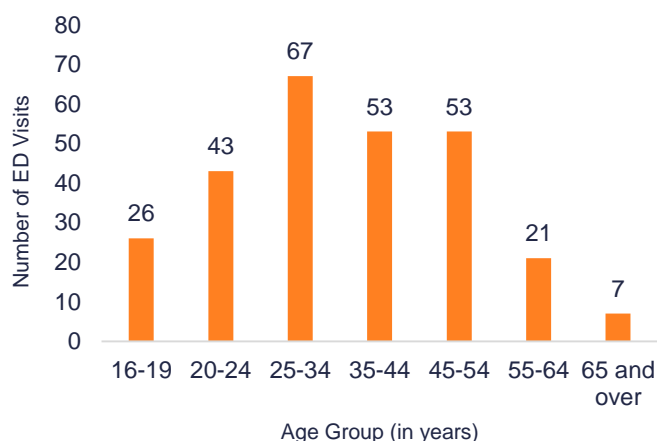
- Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries.
- Nebraska Hospital Association, Nebraska ECODE database.

**WATER. REST. SHADE.**  
The work can't get done without them.

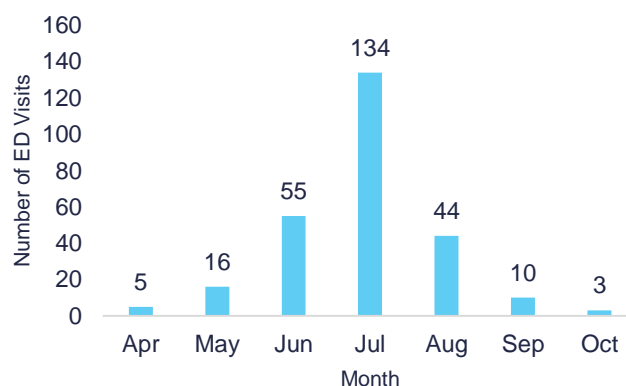
### WHO IS AFFECTED?

Any workers exposed to hot and humid conditions are at risk of heat illness. Some workers might be at greater risk than others. Occupations most affected by heat-related illness include construction; trade, transportation, and utility; agriculture and building/grounds; and maintenance and cleaning occupations.

**Number of work-related ED visits for heat illness by age group, Nebraska, 2008–2012 <sup>2</sup>**



**Number of work-related ED visits for heat illness by month, Nebraska, 2008–2012 <sup>2</sup>**



## HEAT-RELATED HEALTH PROBLEMS

### HEAT STROKE

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related disorder. It occurs when the body is unable to control its temperature.

Symptoms:

- Hot, dry skin or profuse sweating
- Hallucinations
- Chills
- Throbbing headache
- High body temperature
- Confusion/dizziness, slurred speech

### HEAT CRAMPS

Heat cramps usually affect workers who sweat a lot during strenuous activity. Sweating depletes the body's salt and moisture levels.

Symptoms:

- Muscle pain or spasms usually in the abdomen, arms, or legs.

### HEAT EXHAUSTION

Heat exhaustion is the body's response to an excessive loss of the water and salt, usually through excessive sweating.

Symptoms:

- Heavy sweating
- Extreme weakness or fatigue
- Dizziness, confusion
- Nausea
- Muscle cramps
- Slightly elevated body temperature
- Fast and shallow breathing

### HEAT RASH

Heat rash is a skin irritation caused by excessive sweating during hot, humid weather.

Symptoms:

- Heat rash looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters.
- It is more likely to occur on the neck and upper chest, in the groin, under the breasts, and in elbow creases.

## PREVENTING HEAT ILLNESS IN WORKERS

### FOR EMPLOYERS

- Provide training about the hazards leading to heat illness and how to prevent them
- Provide cool water to workers close to the work area. At least one pint of water per hour.
- Schedule frequent rest periods with water breaks in shaded or air-conditioned areas.
- Routinely check workers at risk of heat illness due to protective clothing and high temperatures.

### FOR WORKERS

- Know signs/symptoms of heat illness; monitor yourself and use a buddy system for coworkers
- Block out direct sun and other heat sources
- Drink plenty of fluids. Drink often (every 15 minutes) and before you are thirsty.
- Avoid beverages containing alcohol or caffeine
- Wear lightweight, light colored, loose-fitting clothing.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT HEAT ILLNESS

NIOSH Heat Stress Topic Page

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/>

OSHA's Campaign to Prevent Heat Illness in Outdoor Workers

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/>

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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